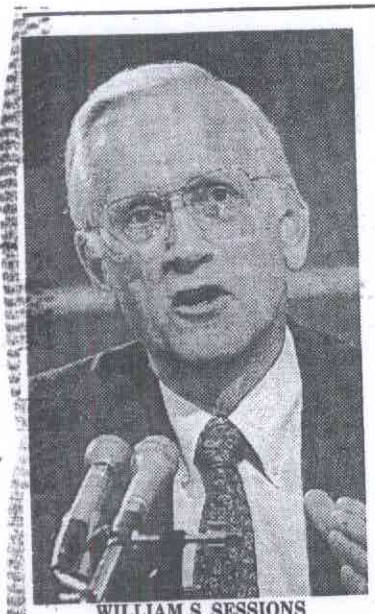

WILLIAM S. SESSIONS
.'. detailed response to charges ready

Clinton to Delay Decis

By Sharon LaFraniere
Washington Post Staff Writer

President Clinton probably will not decide for at least a month whether to retain FBI Director William S. Sessions, White House communications director George Stephanopoulos said yesterday.

A White House official said an initial review of Sessions's case suggests that the Justice Department singled out the FBI director for an ethics investigation. But he said the results of the inquiry by the Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR) showed clear abuses.

Clinton said Thursday that he wants Attorney General-designate Janet Reno to review the department's findings "before we say anything about it."

Lawyers for Sessions only this week finished a detailed response to the OPR's charges of unethical conduct.

The delay in a White House decision about Sessions's fate leaves the FBI in a state of agitation. In the top ranks of the FBI and in some field offices, Sessions's support has all but drained away, FBI sources said.

But minority FBI officials continue to back the director strongly. Yesterday, Bernando M. Perez, special agent in charge of the Albuquerque field office, said in an interview that many Hispanic agents hope Clinton will allow

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ion About FBI Chief, Aide Says

Sessions to serve out the five years left in his 10-year term. On

Support for Sessions has all but drained away in top FBI ranks, sources say. But minority officials back him.

Tuesday, Sessions will attend a speech at the FBI headquarters by Coretta Scott King, widow of the slain civil rights leader and a strong supporter of the FBI director's efforts to eliminate racial discrimination in hiring and promotion. An FBI official said King's black history month speech was scheduled before the Office of Professional Responsibility released its findings.

In its Jan. 19 report, OPR accused Sessions of misusing FBI resources and knowingly claiming an improper tax exemption. A second report, delivered Feb. 5 to Acting Attorney General Stuart M. Gerson, addresses what one high-ranking administration official described as the most serious question about Sessions's conduct—whether he received a "sweetheart deal" on his $375,000 home mortgage from Riggs National Bank.

Other mortgage lenders have said they would have been highly unlikely to approve such a large loan on the basis of Sessions's income.

A mortgage rate survey also shows that the average interest rate charged by local lenders was slighty higher than the rate the Riggs bank charged Sessions and his wife.

Sessions has said he sought no special treatment from Riggs and properly qualified for the loan. His wife, Alice, said in a recent interview that she does not believe the bank gave the couple any break.